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A.D. 1477.

In Honour of

William Caxton

this Pamphlet is

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A. & 1477.

In Honour of

# William Caxton

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+ Introduction +

THE present year completes four centuries since William Caxton introduced the invaluable Art of Printing into England. Such an important anniversary will doubtless be marked in many ways.

A Citizen and Goldsmith/ deeply interested/ reproduces in this pamphlet the excellent Rules for the Conduct of Life presented by the Corporation of London to every apprentice on whom its freedom is conferred.

Rousdon + June. 1877.



SOME

# Rules

FOR THE

## *Conduct of Life.*

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Consider your Ways. Hag. i. 5.

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LONDON:

PRINTED BY FIELD & TUER, 50, LEADENHALL STREET, E.C.

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1877.



## *Rules for the Conduct of Life.*

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### Rule I.

W<sup>H</sup>ATEVER you at any time intend to do, consider the end which you therein propose to yourself, and be sure that it be always really good, or at least innocent. He who does any thing, and knows not why or wherefore, acts foolishly ; and he who aims at an unlawful end acts wickedly, which is the worst sort of folly. If you are careful always to observe this fundamental rule, you will thereby avoid many sins which would disturb your conscience, and also many trifling actions which would tend to your discredit or trouble your repose.

## *Rules for the*

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### **Rule 2.**

**W**HEN you have thus fixed upon a proper end to aim at in each action, then consider not only what are the lawful means to be used in order to this end, but also how these means are best to be applied. That which is unlawful ought not to be done, even for the obtaining of a good end; and means, in themselves good, have often failed of success, for want of prudence in the management of them.

## *Conduct of Life.*

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### Rule 3.

WHEN you are seeking for a good end, proper means, and the right way of using them, remember that the knowledge of all this must not rest in idle speculation or plausible discourse, but ought to be effectually reduced to practice, as often as you have an opportunity for it. The man who thinks wisely, and discourses judiciously, is never to be excused if his practice, when there is occasion for it, is not answerable to his thoughts and words. *To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin. And that servant which knew his Lord's will and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.* James iv. 17; Luke, xii. 47.

Take the sum and substance of these three rules in short:—Let the end you aim at be always good; be vigorous in making use of the proper means for the compassing of such an end; and in doing this be always very circumspect. If you proceed after this manner, you will certainly obtain the great end you propose to yourself in the life to come; and, if you fall short of some things which you desire in this world, you will have this comfort, that God thinks fit to deny them to you, not for any fault of yours, but for other good reasons, which he knows though you do not.

## *Rules for the*

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### Rule 4.

SINCE our life here is short and uncertain, and the pleasures of it are always intermixt with doubts, fears, and sorrows, of one kind or other, and since after it there is a life to come which is to last to eternity, a wise man will never propose the joys, pleasures, or prosperity of this transitory world as the ultimate end of all, or indeed of any of his actions, but will always look beyond it, and make it his great business to secure his happiness in that other life upon which he must soon and unavoidably enter. *O that they were wise, that they understood this; that they would consider their latter end!* Deut. xxxii. 29. *So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.* Psal. xc. 12. Eternity is an end beyond which there can be nothing; and therefore, whilst we have time, we ought to make due provision for it, this being the only true wisdom.

## *Conduct of Life.*

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### Rule 5.

SINCE death is the only unavoidable passage into eternity, a wise man will make it the constant business of his life that he may die well, and that death may prove to him a passage, not into eternal misery, but into everlasting happiness. Whoever is careless of this, it had been much better for him never to have been born.

## *Rules for the*

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### Rule 6.

THE only sure way thus to die well, and at peace with God, is to live well. It is a foolish thing to rely upon what is very improperly called a death-bed repentance, to which God has made no promise. Repentance consists in a reformation of life; and what an absurd thing it is for a man to pretend to reform his life when life itself is just at an end.

## *Conduct of Life.*

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### Rule 7.

TO live well is to be constantly obedient to God's commands, and never willing to do or desire that which is contrary to any of them. And in order to this you must be careful to know what these commands are, and to form a right notion of every one of them; without which you cannot give a due obedience to them. For which reason, if you have had the advantage of a good education, it is your duty to make yourself thoroughly acquainted with the Holy Scriptures, where all God's commands are plainly recorded and set forth: if you are wholly illiterate, it is then your duty to make the best inquiry you can, what are the several things which GOD, your supreme Lord and Judge, requires from you. *Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report,—if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things.* Phil. iv. 8.

## *Rules for the*

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### Rule 8.

**A**RM yourself, and often beg of God to arm you, with a fixt and firm resolution, that neither hope nor fear nor shame nor hatred, nor love of any person or thing, shall at any time prevent you from doing what you know to be your duty, or prevail with you to commit what you know or believe to be a sin. Reason is the rudder wherewith you are to steer your course, and religion the compass by which you are to guide it; but resolution is the wind that will set you forward, without which your sails will often flag. Every morning, therefore, beg of God to instil this resolution into you, and often renew it in the course of each day. *Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.* Matth. x. 28. *We ought to obey God rather than men.* Acts v. 29. *Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.* Mark viii. 38.

## *Conduct of Life.*

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### Rule 9.

**L**ET your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. Matth. v. 16. But take not praise to yourself of anything which you do. Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory. Psalm cxv. 1. Who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it. 1 Cor. iv. 7. To deserve the love and good-will of those who know you may well be a satisfaction, and in many cases of use to you; but the praise of men is an empty bubble, and so far from being of any real benefit that it serves only to puff up those who are fond of it with pride and vanity, and thereby make them odious to God, and despicable in the sight even of those who praise them.

## *Rules for the*

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### **Rule 10.**

**T**AKE care to fix right principles well in your mind; for want of which men are often inconsistent and unsteady in their actions, and uneasy to themselves and others. And, when you have well fixed your principles, be sure always to speak and act according to them, and never to vary from them for the sake of party or any other worldly consideration. For thus doing, God, your own conscience, and good men will approve you; and you ought not to be moved at the censures of fools or wicked men.

## *Conduct of Life.*

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### Rule II.

WHATEVER you do or speak, let it always be done in its proper order, and in a suitable manner. Let that which is of the greatest importance be first taken care of. *Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.* Matth. vi. 33. Let serious things be spoken and done seriously: let good and friendly offices be performed with charity and good-will, not grudgingly or of necessity. And the like may be said of all other your words and actions, which, when they are not only good but also suitable to the importance which they do or ought to carry in them, are pleasant to be seen and observed. But when there is a disagreement between the thing spoken or done and the manner of speaking or doing it, it becomes more or less offensive, and sometimes ridiculous.

## *Rules for the*

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### **Rule 12.**

**B**E in reality what you are willing to be thought to be. Every man desires to be thought honest, just, and virtuous, that thereby he may gain love and good-will from all that know him. Now the only sure way to be thought so is really to be so. Hypocrisy may for a while deceive the world; but in a little time it will be detected, and render an hypocrite odious to men, as he always is to God.

## *Conduct of Life.*

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### Rule 13.

BE in charity with all men ; that is, fill your heart with a sincere love for all mankind,—friends, strangers, and even enemies, if you have any. If you cannot always do this for their sakes who are of the same nature with you, yet do it for the sake of God your Creator, who commands it, and of Christ your Redeemer, who, whilst we were yet sinners, and thereby enemies, died for us. Root out from your mind all envy, malice, hatred, and all ill-nature :—these are the storms and tempests of the soul, and the chief causes of all the disturbances in the world. *Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice : and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.* Eph. iv. 31, 32. Particularly, never be angry with a man, and much less hate him, for being of a different persuasion from you in matters of religion. *The servant of the Lord may not strive, but be gentle unto all men, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves.* 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25. In many cases you innocently may, and sometimes you ought, by lawful means to defend yourself from an injury ; but never do or say any thing beyond what is necessary for your own just defence, or by way of revenge. *Vengeance is mine ; I will repay, saith the Lord.* Be not therefore overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. Rom. xii. 19, 21. Scarce any man is capable of hating another who he finds sincerely loves him.

## *Rules for the*

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### **Rule 14.**

AFFABILITY and innocent cheerfulness in conversation very much tend to maintain good-will and agreement among those who converse together. Let it therefore always be your care, in whatever company you are, that your discourse, in your turn, be rational, easy, and inoffensive. Abstain from all biting and satirical jests and speeches, which will be remembered by others when they are forgotten by yourself. There is no man but will take it ill to be set in an odious or ridiculous light, although it be but in sport.

## *Conduct of Life.*

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### Rule 15.

BE always ready, according to your power, to relieve the poor and help the distressed. This will give great delight to your own mind, and gain you the good-will of all that know you. Remember that the fortune you enjoy is not your own, but God's: he is the proprietor, you are only the steward of it, and must one day give a strict account of your stewardship. If, therefore, in your account there should be much that is unnecessary and might have been spared, and almost nothing for the relief of the poor, the fatherless, and the widow, can you ever hope to receive the reward of a faithful steward?

## *Rules for the*

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### Rule 16.

BE well content with your own condition, whatsoever it be. Endeavour by honest labour and industry to make your circumstances better than they are, for the good both of yourself and others; but if such your endeavours do not meet with success, or if heavy afflictions bear hard upon you, remember that GOD governs the world by a particular providence; that *a sparrow does not fall to the ground without him*, Matth. x. 29: that *whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth*, Heb. xii. 6: that *it is good for us to be afflicted, that we may learn his statutes*, Psal. cxix. 71. Remember all this, and more that might be added both from reason and holy Scripture, to the like purpose. Bear your afflictions patiently, and make the right use of them, and hope for a blessed reward in the life to come.

## *Conduct of Life.*

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### Rule 17.

MEDdle not with the affairs of any other man which do not belong to you, except it be at his own desire, to do him a charitable or friendly office ; and this without doing any manner of wrong to another. It is a very unacceptable thing to be a busy-body in other men's matters, either by word or deed : therefore *Study to be quiet, and do your own business.* 1 Thess. iv. 11.

## *Rules for the*

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### **Rule 18.**

**E**NGAGE not in any party quarrels (whether public or private) further than the laws of GOD or your country oblige you, least you be crushed between them. Exercise yourself *to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men.* Acts xxiv. 16. This will give you quietness in your own mind; and the fault will not be yours if you are not at peace with all men, which will be a great satisfaction to you.

## *Conduct of Life.*

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### Rule 19.

LEAD not an idle life, but be constantly employed in some honest business, whereby you may do good both to yourself and others. Idleness will betray you into many evils and inconveniences ; for the spirit of man is of an active nature, and, rather than be altogether idle, will be apt to employ itself in that which is evil : nor does a man ever lie more open to temptation than when he has nothing at all to do. If, therefore, you would keep yourself innocent, be careful to keep yourself always employed ; for besides that idleness would prove a snare to you, it is a shame and a sin, where there is so much of GOD's work to be done in the world, that any man who pretends to be his servant should stand still, and not put his helping hand towards carrying it on.

## *Rules for the*

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### Rule 20.

**B**E not slothful in business, Rom. xii. 11 ; for that is much the same with idleness, and sometimes worse. But when you have a fair prospect of doing what is good, and rightly understand the ways and means of performing it, go on with resolution until you have completed it. You may possibly be sometimes defeated in a good purpose ; but it is your duty to attempt it whenever you find a reasonable probability of success.

## *Conduct of Life.*

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### Rule 21.

ENGAGE yourself in no more business than what you find yourself able to go through with: the want of this caution has made the life of many a man uneasy and unhappy, and involved his family and friends in numberless troubles and perplexities.

## *Rules for the*

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### Rule 22.

WHEN you find yourself well able to do a thing without the assistance of any one but GOD, never put it or any part of it off to be done by any other man, of whose honesty, sufficiency, and industry you cannot be so sure as, in such a case, you may be of your own. But if you find that you want the help of others, let not the vanity of having all the praise to yourself make you decline it, least the good you aim at may thereby be lost.

## *Conduct of Life.*

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### Rule 23.

WHEN you find yourself able to perform a good work to-day, do not put it off till to-morrow. Many a good undertaking has failed by unnecessary delay. *Thou knowest not what shall be on the morrow, nor what a day may bring forth:* therefore *whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.* James iv. 14; Prov. xxvii. 1; Eccles. ix. 10.

## *Rules for the*

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### **Rule 24.**

**I**F very much business unavoidably comes at once upon you, be not discouraged, for that will make you negligent; but consider how to put it in the best order, that one thing may be done after another, or without one hindering another.

## *Conduct of Life.*

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### Rule 25.

BE always a good manager of your time, and lay hold of each opportunity that offers for the doing of whatever is necessary to be done. If you neglect a proper opportunity, you may not perhaps meet with it again: whereas, by laying hold of it when it offers, you will be able to dispatch much business in a little time; and if you accustom yourself to rise early, you will find that you have time enough to do all the business that you have to do, and much more than persons who rise late will think possible to be done.

## *Rules for the*

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### **Rule 26.**

**W**HERE you are not able to finish a business without the help of others, call in speedily such persons to your assistance as are fit to be employed in it. The more hands are employed, the more work is done ; provided they are managed in such good order as not to be an hindrance to one another.

## *Conduct of Life.*

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### Rule 27.

**A**LWAYS consider the probable consequences of what you intend to do, that you may guard against those that are evil or inconvenient. A thing may at first sight look very plausible, but if you look well to what may follow from it you may find good reasons for laying it aside, or at least for altering your measures.

## *Rules for the*

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### Rule 28.

CONSULT with yourself, and with others who are knowing and honest, about everything of moment which you are to undertake ; but waste not that time in unprofitable talk which may be better employed in action. Thought is quick ; and when a wise man is once well informed (of which he will take care), he will not be long in deliberating what is best to be done : but many a good opportunity has been lost by too much consultation. A wise man thinks much, which is soon done ; but speaks no more than is necessary, being a good husband of his time, which is very precious.

## *Conduct of Life.*

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### Rule 29.

L AWFUL gain may and ought to be made of the business which you engage in ; for without this, few men would be able to support themselves and their families, or do much good to others. But greediness after gain is a mischievous thing. *They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition ; for the love of money is the root of all evil.* 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10. Among other qualifications of a righteous man, this is one, that he *despiseth the gain of oppressions*, Isaiah xxxiii. 15 ; that is to say, all gain but what is just and honest. Gain is a very strong temptation ; against which, therefore, you must be upon your guard.

## *Rules for the*

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### Rule 30.

TAKE some proper times to relax your thoughts from business, that you may be better able to return to it. A heavy load, constantly borne without intermission, will waste your strength, and make you unfit for every thing. At such seasons divert yourself with pleasant and innocent reading, which at the same time may entertain and instruct you. But beware of all such books as are licentious or profane: these may be well compared to palatable poison; there may be wit in them, but if you read them they will insensibly corrupt both your morals and principles.

Entertain yourself in the society of friends, and with such conversation as may enliven your spirits without corrupting your heart. But shun flatterers, who, for some end of their own, will soothe and encourage you in every thing, whether it be right or wrong.

Use moderate exercise, of such kind as is most agreeable to you, most suited to your constitution, and most conducive to your health.

Or there may be no harm in sometimes amusing yourself at any of the customary games of chance and skill. But never play for any thing that is more than you or your friend may win or loose without any manner of concern. Remember it is designed to be diversion, not business. If it employs too much of your time or thought, or provokes your passions, it changes its nature, loses its end and ceases to be innocent.

## *Conduct of Life.*

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### Rule 31.

TAKE care of your health, as well for the sake of your relations and dependants as for your own sake. Health and strength are gifts, for the use of which we shall have to account to Him who gave them: upon a principle of conscience, therefore, be strictly sober and temperate in eating and drinking. Intemperance is the cause of many diseases. Sickness is always a melancholy condition; but most of all so when it is caused by a man's own irregularity and intemperance.

## *Rules for the*

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### Rule 32.

A T all times keep your passions under your command. Let them ever be guided by your reason, but never be a guide to it. Like fire and water, they are good servants, but very bad masters; and if you suffer them to lead your reason, they will often betray you to say and do such things as will hurt yourself, disoblige your friends, create you enemies, and expose you to scorn and contempt.

## *Conduct of Life.*

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### Rule 33.

FLY from the first motions of every temptation to sin, and take sanctuary in good thoughts, good books, or good and virtuous company. The surest way to keep yourself pure and unspotted is to fly from temptation. If you cannot fly from it, call God to your assistance, and arm yourself with a firm resolution to resist it; and always be upon your guard, that you be not surprised. *Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.* Matth. xxvi. 41. It is much safer not to be wounded, than afterwards to be healed with a scar left behind;—to keep your enemy at a distance, than to engage with him when the victory is uncertain.

## *Rules for the*

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### Rule 34.

B E very cautious what sort of friendships and acquaintance you contract: the character and success of your whole life in a great measure depend upon it. Become not familiar on any account with ignorant, empty or vicious persons, from whom you can learn nothing but vice or folly. *Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men: avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.* Prov. iv. 14, 15. But endeavour, as much as you can, always to keep company with men of the best reputation for integrity and knowledge in their respective stations and calling. Associating with such persons will be of real service to you, establish your credit in the world, and contribute to your improvement both in wisdom and virtue.

## *Conduct of Life.*

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### Rule 35.

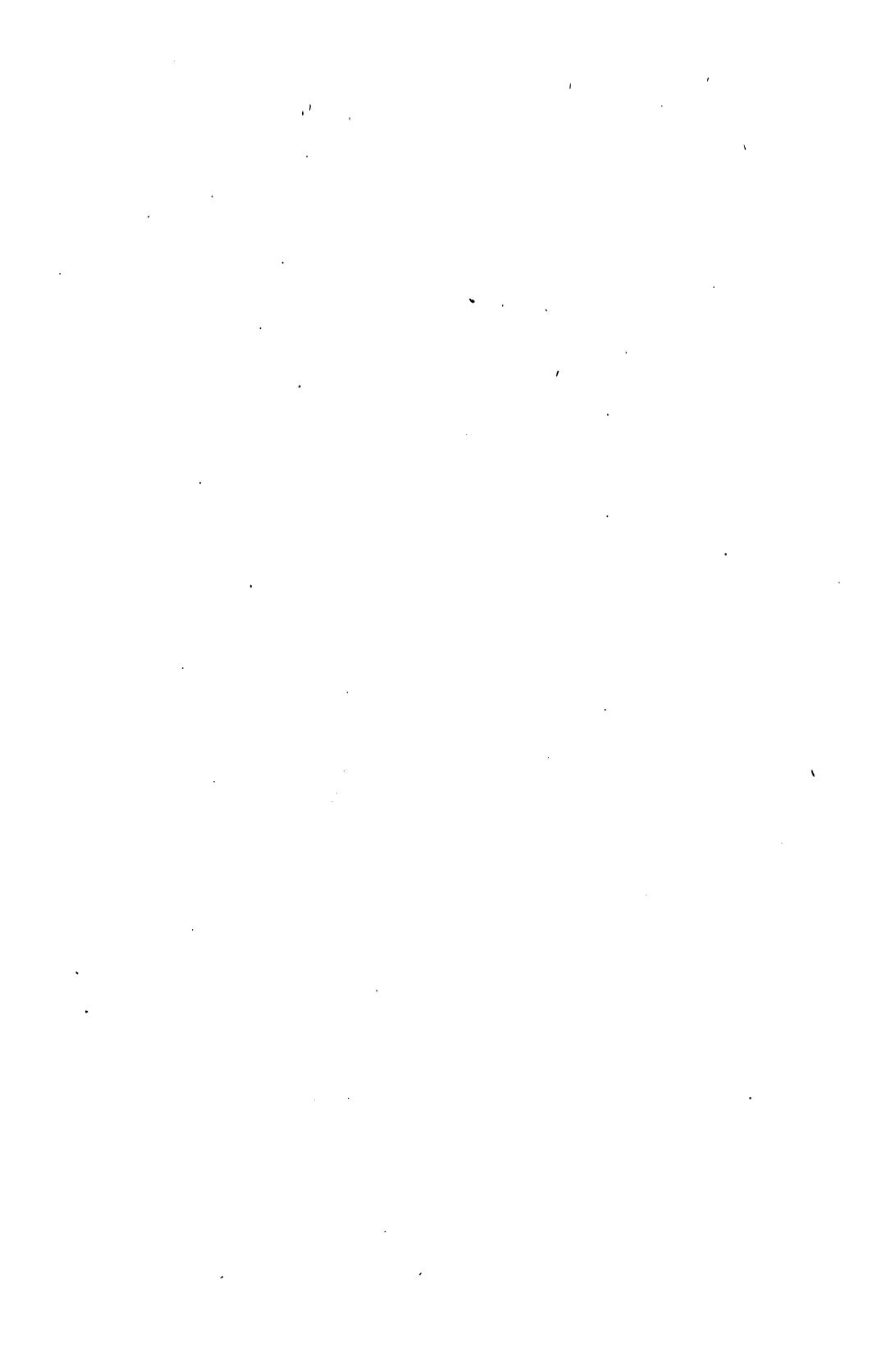
BE disposed to comply with all the innocent customs and manners of the place where you live, and the company that you keep, as far as you can with prudence; but be sure that they are innocent, and follow not a multitude to do evil. Remember that you are a Christian, and be neither ashamed nor afraid to speak and act like one upon all occasions. *Be ready to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you*, 1 Pet. iii. 15; neither affecting to be thought a saint, nor dreading to be deemed a hypocrite, by any man for so doing. But be not fond of entering into debates about controverted or mysterious points of religion, of which you may be wholly ignorant without any hazard of your salvation. Such disputes often do great harm, and seldom do any good.

# *Rules for the Conduct of Life.*

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## Rule 36.

HAVE God in all your thoughts; study to know him and do his will, and be instant in prayer to him, through the mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ, for the assistance of his Holy Spirit to preserve and direct you.



keep within compass  
and then you'll be sure  
to escape many troubles  
which others endure

